



NAVY NEWS

ISSUE 01 2015

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A SEARCH FOR HOPE

Searching for Air Asia QZ8501

NAVY SPOUSES

Pillar of strength for Navy personnel

SAF50:

The RSN in history



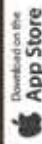


OPS BATTLEFORCE 2

SAF
50

OUR SAF : GIVING STRENGTH
TO OUR NATION

FREE TO PLAY



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ISSUE 01 2015

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The mission of the RSN is to enhance Singapore's peace and security through deterrence and diplomacy, and should these fail, to secure a swift and decisive victory over the aggressor at sea. The RSN will ensure Singapore's seaward defence, secure our sea lines of communication, and maintain a high level of operational readiness and a broad spectrum of capabilities to support our national interest.

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RADM Lai Chung Han
Chief of Navy

Remembering Mr Lee Kuan Yew

On 26 January 1974, our founding Prime Minister officially opened Brani Naval Base, the first real home we could call our own. At the opening ceremony, Mr Lee Kuan Yew spoke about the Navy's role in protecting Singapore's seaward approaches.

More than thirty years later, in his book *Hard Truths To Keep Singapore Going*, Mr Lee would again affirm the need for a capable Navy to keep Singapore's sea lanes open. The Navy remembers and thanks Mr Lee for all that he has done for Singapore and the SAF. We will continue to be steadfast in our mission.

Strength of our Pioneers

From our humble beginnings of two wooden ships, the Navy is today a capable and balanced maritime force. This has been possible only because of the strength of our Navy pioneers. What they lacked in equipment and material, they more than made up for with their stout hearts and strong spirits. The late 1WO Loke Meng put it well: "Though our ships were wooden, our men were iron."

During the recent SAF50@Vivo celebrations, I had the privilege of interacting with some of our pioneers on board RSS *Endurance*, including the members of the Singapore Women's Auxiliary Naval Service. They all spoke fondly of their time in the Navy – it was like yesterday for them. More significantly, they were proud, and rightly so, of their part in defending a fledgling nation and nurturing a young Navy.

CPT (RET) Ernest Wickramasinghe was unable to join us for SAF50@Vivo, but wrote me a letter recounting his pride at being the commanding officer of RSS *Panglima* during Operation Thunderstorm. RSS *Panglima* had to remain at sea for 23 days, but his men served with "courage and discipline" and none of them "flinched from their duties in spite of lack of sleep or their inability to shower or change". Theirs was an indomitable spirit.

We owe our Navy pioneers a debt of gratitude for laying a strong foundation for the RSN.

Strength of our Everyday

I believe this same spirit is alive in the men and women of our Navy today.

At the turn of the year, we deployed five ships to join the multinational search effort for Air Asia QZ8501. Our sailors were unflinching in the face of rough seas and challenging conditions, but stayed focused on getting their job done well and professionally.

This is the strength of our Everyday.

It is not just reflected in contingency operations, missile firings and major exercises. Much like our forces on standby, it is a quiet strength that underpins all that we do. We see it in our daily training, maintenance and preparations. It is found in our patrols in the Singapore Strait and off Pedra Branca. It is ever present in our constant vigilance over our bases and our ships. The strength of our Everyday is in our people faithfully carrying out their daily tasks and duties.

As we look to the future, it is the strength of our Everyday that will carry us beyond horizons!

QUICK REP



9th Naval Advanced Officers' Course Graduation

27 naval officers graduated from the 9th Naval Advanced Officers' Course on 25 Nov 14 in a ceremony held at the Naval Officers' Advanced School. The course prepared the graduates to take up shipboard Assistant Operations Officer roles. CPT Lin Dianxue emerged as Top Graduate and Distinguished Graduates were CPT Chua Sheng Hao and CPT Mereith Lo.

Handing over of reins at Base Command

On 5 Dec 14, a new batch of Full-Time National Servicemen became full fledged sea soldiers at a turning operational ceremony at Victory Hall Auditorium at Changi Naval Base. The ceremony was held in conjunction with a handing over ceremony from Operationally Ready National Servicemen completing their ten-year National Service requirements.



Naval Diving Unit community outreach

The Naval Diving Unit took part in two community outreach events over the Christmas season. On 6 Dec 14, the Underwater Demolition Group participated in the Children's Charities Association in the Christmas Fair and Walk the Extra Mile programme at Orchard Road. On 10 Dec 14, the Special Warfare Group volunteered at Willing Hearts, a non-profit organisation that operates a soup kitchen that provides daily meals for the needy. They helped to wash, cut and cook food before packing and delivering the prepared lunches.



Senior Military Expert Appointment Ceremony

21 military experts (MEs) from the RSN, out of a total of 50 MEs from the Singapore Armed Forces, were appointed senior military experts at the 8th SAF Senior Military Experts Appointment Ceremony on 28 Nov 14. Minister of State for Defence Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman officiated at the ceremony, which marked the completion of the Military Domain Experts Course (MDEC). The MDEC develops MEs' leadership competency, military domain knowledge and specialised skills, preparing them to take on roles in areas such as engineering and military medicine. ME4 Teo Eng Hui Malcolm received the Sword of Honour.

Tertiary students visit the RSN

About 100 junior college and polytechnic students visited the Navy on 9 Dec 14 as part of the MINDEF Internship Programme. They visited the Naval Diving Unit, rode on a fast craft utility and learnt about the operations and capabilities of strike craft on frigate RSS *Stalwart*. From 12 to 16 Jan, another group of junior college students took part in the MINDEF/SAF Attachment Programme. Over five days, the students caught a glimpse of jobs in the RSN, from those on frigates and landing ship tanks, to being a diver or part of Accompanying Sea Security Teams.



Naval Diving Unit (NDU) Anniversary

The Naval Diving Unit (NDU) celebrated its 43th anniversary on 12 Dec 14 at Sembawang Camp. Divers participated in a biathlon to commemorate the event.



Navy Women's Career Seminar

The inaugural Navy Women's career seminar was held on 13 Dec 14 at SCAPE, and was organized for females to gain a better understanding of life in the Navy. Female personnel shared their stories in the Navy, and how they serve in different roles such as Naval Officers, Naval Warfare System Engineers and Naval Warfare System Experts. The seminar was attended by about 130 females.

PS(D) visit to Naval Logistics Command (NALCOM)

On 17 Dec 14, Permanent Secretary (Defence) Mr Chan Yeng Kit visited Naval Logistics Command (NALCOM) in Changi Naval Base where he was given an organizational brief and a tour of the key support infrastructure and facilities. He visited the Changi naval warehouse, heavyweight torpedo workshop, ship-lift compound and the air-independent propulsion engine workshop. This provided PS(D) with an overview of the full spectrum of NALCOM's engineering and logistics support capabilities in enabling RSN's missions. In addition, the visit served as a platform for him to engage the personnel from NALCOM.



Chief of Defence Force's year end visit to units

Chief of Defence Force LG Ng Chee Meng visited operational units in Tuas Naval Base, Jurong Island and Tengah Air Base on 31 Dec 14 to express his appreciation for servicemen who were on duty during the festive season. LG Ng started his visit with patrol vessel RSS *Independence*, where he thanked the sailors for their dedication to protecting Singapore's waters.

NALCOM Anniversary

NALCOM celebrated their 29th anniversary at the Singapore Sports Hub on 31 Dec 14. The event, themed Together Forward, was an opportunity for NALCOM personnel to reflect what they had accomplished in 2014, and to look ahead towards the new year.



Intermediate Specialisation Course 2/14 Graduation Ceremony

24 Military Experts from the 2/14 Intermediate Specialisation Course qualified as Navy systems supervisors on 8 Jan after they completed a 26-week course conducted by the Naval Military Expert Institute (NMI). ME1 Tony Wong won the Top Learner Book Prize for this course.

185 Squadron visit to MINDSville@Napiri

185 Squadron visited MINDSville@Napiri on 12 Jan, which is a centre dedicated to the care of both children and adults with intellectual disabilities. The men and women spent the day interacting with the residents, playing games, giving out prizes and putting up performances. They also set up a photo booth, allowing younger residents of the centre to have their photos taken in Navy uniforms.



Change of Appointment Ceremony for Master Chief NDU

MWO Alvin Chia took over as Master Chief Naval Diving Unit from Senior Warrant Officer Ong Siang Thai at a change of appointment parade held at Naval Diving Unit, Sembawang Camp on 20 Jan.



42nd RSN Swimming Meet

The Singapore Armed Forces Counselling Centre held a biennial SAF Paracounsellor's Appreciation Event on 2 Feb at Furama Riverfront. The event demonstrated the SAF's appreciation for all paracounsellors who have volunteered their time and effort to care for our servicemen and women. A total of 167 paracounsellors were awarded the Paracounselling Excellence Awards in three categories – Distinguished Service Awards, Commendable Service Awards (CSA) and Certificates of Excellence, to recognise their dedication to care and exemplary spirit of service. A total of 11 Navy personnel were awarded with the CSA.



72nd MIDS Commissioning Parade

48 naval officer cadets graduated from the 72nd Midshipman batch at the SAFTI Military Institute on 17 Jan. President Tony Tan Keng Yam reviewed the parade, which concluded 38 weeks of training at the Officer Cadet School. 2LT Ooi Bo Wei received the Sword of Honour.

Inaugural Maritime Security Operations Workshop

The National Maritime Operations Group of the Singapore Maritime Crisis Centre organised the inaugural Maritime Security Operations Workshop on 23 Jan at the Changi Command and Control Centre. The workshop provided updates on developments and initiatives from the Singapore Maritime Crisis Centre and maritime security agencies. It was attended by more than 130 participants from Republic of Singapore Navy and other participating organisations such as Ministry of Home Affairs, Immigration and Checkpoints Authority, and the Port of Singapore Authority.



Singapore Armed Forces Sports Association (SAFSA) Inter-Formation Air Weapons

The Inter Formation Air Weapon Competition 2014/2015 was held from 4 to 6 Feb. Team Navy triumphed in the Air Rifle Women (Team) segment, while the Men's team took third and fourth position at segment and formation level respectively.



SAF Leadership Development Seminar 2015

The Singapore Armed Forces Training Institute (SAFTI) hosted the SAF Leadership Development Seminar (SLDS) on 6 Feb at SAFTI Military Institute, Officer Cadet School Main Auditorium. The SLDS helped to promote leadership development within the navy through the sharing of leadership insights and experiences to keep leaders abreast on being effective in an evolving, challenging operating environment. The guest of honour was Chief of Navy, RADM Lai Chung Han.

Basic Specialisation Course

58 Military Experts and 41 Full-Time National Serviceman graduated from Basic Specialisation Course 1/14 on 9 Feb. Over the 28-week course, students underwent training in three phases - the naval foundation module, system operator module, and on-the-job-training. The course was conducted at the Naval Military Expert Institute.



SAFSA Swim Meet

Team Navy emerged champions at the 46th SAFSA Swim Meet Final on 11 Feb at Changi Naval Base. CPT Jonathan Ma from the RSN set a new record in the 400m freestyle men's regular open category with a timing of 5:15:19.

SAFSA Inter-Formation Championship 14/15

Team Navy emerged third at the SAF Sports Association Inter-formation Championship for 2014/2015 which concluded on 26 Feb. Combat Service Support Command and the Republic of Singapore Air Force came in first and second respectively.



SAF50@Vivo

SAF50@Vivo, which ran from 12 to 15 Feb, played host to over 87,000 people at VivoCity. Landing ship tank RSS *Endurance* opened its doors to the public, offering ship tours and rides on the Fast Craft Utility. There was also a shore exhibition where visitors got to experience simulators on flying a fighter jet or shooting down a target with a ship's 0.5" CIS gun. The exhibition enabled visitors to learn about the 50 years of SAF history, including the stories of servicemen and servicewomen from all three services who have shaped it. Read more about it on page 22.

SAF50 Cycling Event

On 15 Feb, 56 cyclists from the three services cycled 50km to commemorate both total defence and the SAF's 50th anniversary. The route started and ended from RSS *Endurance*, which was berthed at VivoCity. Read more about it on page 34.



CNV visit on CNY's eve

Chief of Navy RADM Lai Chung Han visited operational units at Tuas and Changi Naval Base on 18 Feb to express his appreciation for servicemen who were on duty during the festive season. RADM Lai started his visit with RSS *Independence* and Changi Defence Squadron, where he thanked the sailors for their dedication to protecting Singapore's waters.



191 Squadron NSMen Engagement

191 SQN held a pre-In Camp Training (ICT) briefing and engagement session for their Operationally Ready National Servicemen (NSMen) on 5 Mar at SAFRA Mount Faber. The session was held to help NSmen prepare for their high-key ICTs, and to update them on NS policies. A ceremony was also held for another 40 NSMen as they became part of the MINDEF Reserve Corp.



Launch of Submarine Training Centre

Chief of Navy RADM Lai Chung Han officiated at the launch of the new Submarine Training Centre (STC) at Changi Naval Base on 11 Mar. The submarine training centre was named after the RSN's first submarine, RSS *Challenger*. RSS *Challenger*, together with RSS *Centurion*, were both retired in a ceremony held in conjunction with the launch of the STC. These submarines have served the RSN well since 1997.

Port Call by Indian Navy Vessel, INS *Sudarshini*

The Indian Navy sail training ship INS *Sudarshini* sailed into VivoCity for a port call from 2 to 7 Mar as part of a series of events to commemorate 50 years of diplomatic relations between Singapore and India. 16 officers from the 13th Naval Junior Officers' Course sailed on INS *Sudarshini* on 6 Mar.



E-Navigation Workshop

The inaugural RSN E-Navigation Workshop 2015 was held on 9 Mar at Victory Hall in RSS Panglima at Changi Naval Base. The workshop provided participants with a broad understanding of E-Navigation and how it can benefit RSN personnel in the conduct of naval operations. The workshop, held in collaboration with the Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology (IMARest), highlighted the emerging trends and the future of digital navigation technologies and systems.



WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Search Operation for Air Asia QZ8501

The SAF deployed more than 400 SAF personnel, two C-130 aircraft, two Super Puma helicopters, five navy ships and a six-man autonomous underwater vehicle team in the multinational search for Air Asia flight QZ8501. The five ships were frigate RSS *Supreme*, missile corvette RSS *Valour*, landing ship tank RSS *Persistence*, mine countermeasure vessel RSS *Kallang* and MV *Swift Rescue*. Read more about the operation on page 16.



Ex Malapura

The RSN participated in Exercise Malapura, a yearly bilateral exercise with the Royal Malaysian Navy that took place from 4 to 15 Mar. Frigate RSS *Stalwart*, missile corvette RSS *Victory* and patrol vessel RSS *Sovereignty* took part in the exercise, which saw both navies carry out joint planning and training, as well as drills in conventional naval warfare and maritime security in the Malacca Strait. The exercise concluded at Lumut Naval Base.



Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition

Frigate RSS *Stalwart* with an embarked Sikorsky S-70B naval helicopter and patrol vessel RSS *Sovereignty* took part in the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition in Mar. The SAF has participated in LIMA since 2001, underscoring the warm and long-standing defence ties between Singapore and Malaysia. Both armed forces interact regularly through bilateral and multilateral exercises, professional exchanges and cross-attendance of courses.



Midshipman Sea Training Deployment

Midshipmen from the 73rd Midshipman batch set off on 6 Mar for a six-week Midshipman Sea Training Deployment aboard landing ship tank RSS *Resolution*. They will call on ports in Muara, Brunei; Kure, Japan and Shanghai, China.



Courtesy calls on CNV Mexico

His Excellency Rogelio Granguillhome,
Mexican Ambassador

South Korea

Vice Admiral Jung Ho Sub
Vice Chief of Naval Operations,
Republic of Korea Navy

Thailand

Admiral Kraison Chansuvanich
Commander-in-Chief, Royal
Thai Navy

United States of America

Admiral Harry B. Harris, Jr.
Commander Pacific Fleet,
United States Navy

SAF50: THE RSN THROUGH THE YEARS

Story by Jonathan Ryan

Photos courtesy of Pioneer, the Navy Museum and MINDEF

The growth of the Singapore Armed Forces has mirrored that of our nation for the past 50 years. Navy News takes a look at some of the key operations the Navy has taken part in along the way.

The Laju Hijack

Four terrorists armed with submachine guns and explosives attacked the Shell Oil Refinery located on Pulau Bukom Besar on 31 Jan 1974.

The group comprised people from the Japanese Red Army and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and aimed to disrupt the oil supply from Singapore to countries they deemed 'unfriendly'.

The terrorists managed to detonate three out of the 12 explosives they were carrying.

To escape, they hijacked the ferry Laju at the Bukom Jetty and held five crew members hostage. This led to a chase, before the hijacked vessel was intercepted and surrounded by RSS *Sea Hawk*, RSS *Independence*, RSS *Sovereignty* and RSS *Daring*.

In exchange for the release of the five crew members, the terrorists wanted safe passage to the Middle East.

Former President Mr S R Nathan, then MINDEF's director of Security and Intelligence, led a 13-man delegation comprising commandos and government officials that flew with the hijackers to Kuwait. They went as guarantors for the safe passage of the hijackers, and later received National Day honours for a successful mission.

(Right) During Operation Thunderstorm, RSN ships carried out replenishment at sea, handing out food, water and clothes to the boat people. While this took place, commandos stood guard to ensure order among the boat people, who were often packed onto rickety vessels.



Four RSN ships deployed during the Laju hijack incident formed a cordon around the hijacked vessel to prevent hijackers from escaping.



Operation Thunderstorm

In April 1975, the Singapore Maritime Command was renamed the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN). Less than a month later, this young force was to experience its crucible moment.

Boat people were fleeing war-torn Indochina and seeking refuge in other Southeast Asian nations.

They entered Singapore waters hoping for shelter, or to use Singapore as a point of transit to other countries.

"The entire Navy was turned out on 1 May 1975 to intercept the flood of vessels coming into Singapore carrying boat people," recalls LTC (RET) Namasevayam who was a gunnery officer on board RSS *Daring*.

The RSN had 14 ships capable of such operations – six missile gun boats, six patrol craft, RSS *Panglima* and RSS *Endeavour*. But the operation was tough for

the young nation and its fledgling defence force.

"It was the first time we've had to handle this sort of situation," said Mr Wong Kan Seng, who was then Head Naval Personnel. He assisted then-Minister of Defence Dr Goh Keng Swee, who led the operation.

RSS *Panglima*, a wooden ship only suited for constabulary duties, was the first RSN ship to confront these initial boats from coming ashore.

The ship, which usually carried out two to three day patrols, stayed out at sea for 23 days.

CPT (RET) Ernest H Wickramasinghe, who was then commanding officer of RSS *Panglima*, said: "It was a very trying time for the officers and men. None of them flinched from their duties in spite of lack of sleep or the inability to shower or change their clothes."

The RSN personnel handed out food and water rations to boats, and repaired malfunctioning ones to ensure their continued safe passage.

2WO (RET) Chan Chun Au, who also served on RSS *Panglima*, was one of the engineers who would board the incoming boats to fix engine faults and keep them seaworthy.

Even now he can recall the "desperate, hungry eyes" of the boat people.

Recounting the operation, 2WO (RET) Chan said that despite the difficulties and challenges, his colleagues and him soldiered on and "just did what we could."

Such was the can-do spirit and steel of the Navy pioneers.



Although Operation Thunderstorm itself lasted only 13 days, the Navy was tasked to continue surveillance patrols through the early 1980s, as such boats continued to trickle in.

The cable car crash

When an oil drilling vessel passing under the Singapore cable car system between Mount Faber and Sentosa snapped the cableway, it sent two cabins and their seven passengers plunging into the inky depths below. Four more cabins were left dangling, leaving thirteen passengers stranded.

As helicopters from the Republic of Singapore Air Force responded swiftly to the passengers in mid-air, RSN divers were activated from Pulau Brani to conduct an underwater search and recovery for the passengers trapped in the two fallen cable cars.

The year was 1983, 12 years after the SAF diving centre – later renamed the Naval Diving Unit – was formed.

While helicopters mounted a mid-air rescue of the passengers stranded in the air, the divers worked non-stop over the next two days to recover both fallen cabins, and all the bodies trapped inside.

The divers, who were often called upon to search for drowning victims or from grounded ships, defied the many challenges posed by this operation.

These included unpredictable currents, churning propellers and the pitch darkness that they were searching in. Despite using powerful torch lights, they were unable to see beyond 30 centimetres.

The success of the mission lay in the divers' ability to keep their cool, said SWO (RET) Bob Chia, who was overseeing a team of divers.

He added that he was proud of the professional team of divers. "Despite the hazardous conditions we gave our all," he said.



RSN divers worked in choppy waters and challenging conditions to rescue passengers and retrieve two fallen cable car cabins.



Naval divers battled adverse conditions in Indonesia's Musi river, such as strong river currents during the monsoon season, murky waters, and even the threat of crocodiles.

Many RSN ships were deployed for the MI185 search and recovery mission – Mine countermeasures vessel RSS Bedok, RSS Kallang and RSS Punggol; missile corvette RSS Valiant; landing ship tanks (LST) RSS Excellence and RSS Perseverance, and missile gun boat RSS Sea Dragon.



Silkair MI185 search and recovery

Many Singaporeans can remember the flight number MI185, the ill-fated Silkair plane that nosedived into Indonesia's Musi river, near the city of Palembang in December 1997.

All 104 passengers, including 46 Singaporeans, were killed in the crash, which also shattered most of the aircraft.

The RSN deployed a host of ships for the recovery operation, including three mine countermeasures vessels (MCMVs), which used their sonar capabilities to scan the riverbed for metal debris and the flight data recorder.

Naval divers searched the river for survivors and debris from the crash, while the Navy's Fokker

50 Maritime Patrol Aircraft were deployed for an aerial search for survivors.

Unfortunately, no survivors were found throughout the search and rescue operation.

2WO (RET) Lye Chai Meng, who was an NDU training warrant then, headed a team of about seven men to plan and conduct diving operations.

He said: "This operation showed me the vulnerability of life and the importance of safe and realistic training."

Operation Blue Orchid

Over five years, from 2003 to 2008, the RSN sent five LST deployments to Iraq, as part of the United Nations-led multinational effort to restore security and stability to the Middle Eastern nation.

The ships, which remained in theatre for two to four months each time, were tasked to safeguard the Al Basra Oil Terminal, which accounts for over 90 percent of Iraq's oil output.

As with many nations in the gulf, oil accounts for a large portion of their country's revenue – 95 percent, in this case.

The security of the oil terminal was thus crucial in rebuilding Iraq's economy, which in October 2003 was in a dire state.

More than half the population was not employed, and the country lacked basic infrastructure such as access to electricity and clean water.

There was also the danger of terrorists disrupting the rebuilding efforts of multinational forces, including the operations of the Al Basra oil terminal.

So the LSTs stood guard, conducting area patrols, security sweeps and boarding operations on ships in the area surrounding the terminal.

The RSN also exercised command and control over coalition forces in the area, including ships from the United Kingdom and the United States.

"We were glad to contribute more. Protecting the oil terminal was a big responsibility because it was the lifeline of Iraq, so we worked very closely with the coalition forces to ensure that it was safe, 24/7," said Bernard Miranda, who commanded the RSN task group twice.

He was the only officer to be deployed on all five missions, and was appointed Deputy Commander Task Force Ashore

in his final deployment.

CPT Lin Dianxue was on that same deployment. Then a full-time national serviceman, he extended his operationally ready date by two months to be part of the final OBO deployment.

During his undergraduate years, he said that even if he had related his experiences to his classmates, it might have been difficult for them to relate to the danger he faced in the gulf.

CPT Lin, who signed on with the Navy after graduating from university, is now an Assistant Operations Officer with the Fast Craft Training Unit.

Looking back on the experience, he said: "It made me wonder if, perhaps, too many Singaporeans here take our security for granted."

Operation Flying Eagle

The earthquake that rumbled along the seabed beneath Sumatra in Indonesia measured 9.1 on the Richter scale.

It gave rise to a tsunami, with massive waves that ravaged the western coast of Sumatra on Boxing Day in December 2004.

The tsunami devastated cities along the coastline such as Banda Aceh and Meulaboh, and killed over 220,000 people.

In the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, the SAF reached out. Operation Flying Eagle was a tri-service Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operation, the largest one it had ever launched.

As part of the relief effort, LST RSS *Endurance* left Singapore about 72 hours after the tsunami first struck.



Operation Blue Orchid: Over a 30-day period, personnel on board the LSTs could radio out as many as 600 queries to ships in the vicinity, to establish facts such as their country of origin and the cargo they carried.

When it anchored after a two-day transit, it was the first foreign warship to arrive in Meulaboh.

Two other LSTs – RSS *Persistence* and RSS *Endeavour* – quickly followed.

It was the first time the RSN had deployed all four LSTs for operations outside Singapore. The fourth ship was out on Operation Blue Orchid in the Northern Arabian Gulf.

"When your people arrived, it lifted our spirits. We knew that we were no longer alone," said COL Geerhan Lantara, who was then-TNI Commander in Meulaboh.

During the three weeks the Humanitarian Assistance Support Group (HASG) was there, personnel pulled 12 to 14 hour days, sending supplies and medical aid to those trapped inland.



Operation Blue Orchid: Divers conducted search for contraband and ensure that the

RSS *Endurance* also served as the command headquarters for the support group, where personnel from all three services worked closely during the operation.

LTC Gerald Lee, who was the Executive Officer of RSS *Endurance*, said that OFE was where HADR training they had undergone became real.

"We assimilated everything we had learnt during previous exercises, and drew relevance from prior experiences to respond to the scenarios we faced," said LTC Lee, who would later take command of RSS *Persistence*.



Operation Flying Eagle was the first time in the RSN's history that all four LSTs were deployed at the same time. Three ships were deployed as part of the Humanitarian Assistance Support Group while the fourth was performing peacekeeping operations in the Northern Arabian Gulf.

hostage for a ransom on \$12 million USD, the highest known amount so far.

To guard against this, the RSN contributes to multinational counter piracy forces, which patrol the GoA.

Since 2009, it has sent five deployments – three LSTs and

two frigates – into theatre, under the ambit of Combined Task Force (CTF) 151. The RSN has also commanded CTF 151 three times.

The role of ships in the GoA is to provide reassurance and safe cover for merchant vessels transiting this international waterway, which is part of a major international shipping route from the Middle East to Asia.

In recent years, their efforts have paid off.

Pirate attacks have been drastically reduced, falling from 237 in 2011 to only one attempt last year. No successful attacks have been carried out since 2012.

Standing guard against threats that could launch at any hour of the day takes focus, said CPT Eric Goh.

Last year, he was one of three operations officers on frigate RSS *Tenacious*, which spent three months in the GoA.

"This deployment requires prolonged persistence," he says. "We may not see action every day, but when action is upon us, we will be ready to respond."

Operation Blue Sapphire

For merchant vessels in the Gulf of Aden (GoA), the threat of piracy looms large.

Pirates in the region, operating out of small speedboats called skiffs, disguise themselves among fishing boats.

When they spot a target, they launch their small, nimble vessels at large merchant ships, and attempt to either rob it or take it hostage.

The attack, if successful, is a lucrative affair. In 2012, pirates took merchant vessel MT *Smyrni*



Counter piracy mission: Ship security teams could launch RHIBs to conduct compliant boarding and investigate skiffs suspected of piracy.

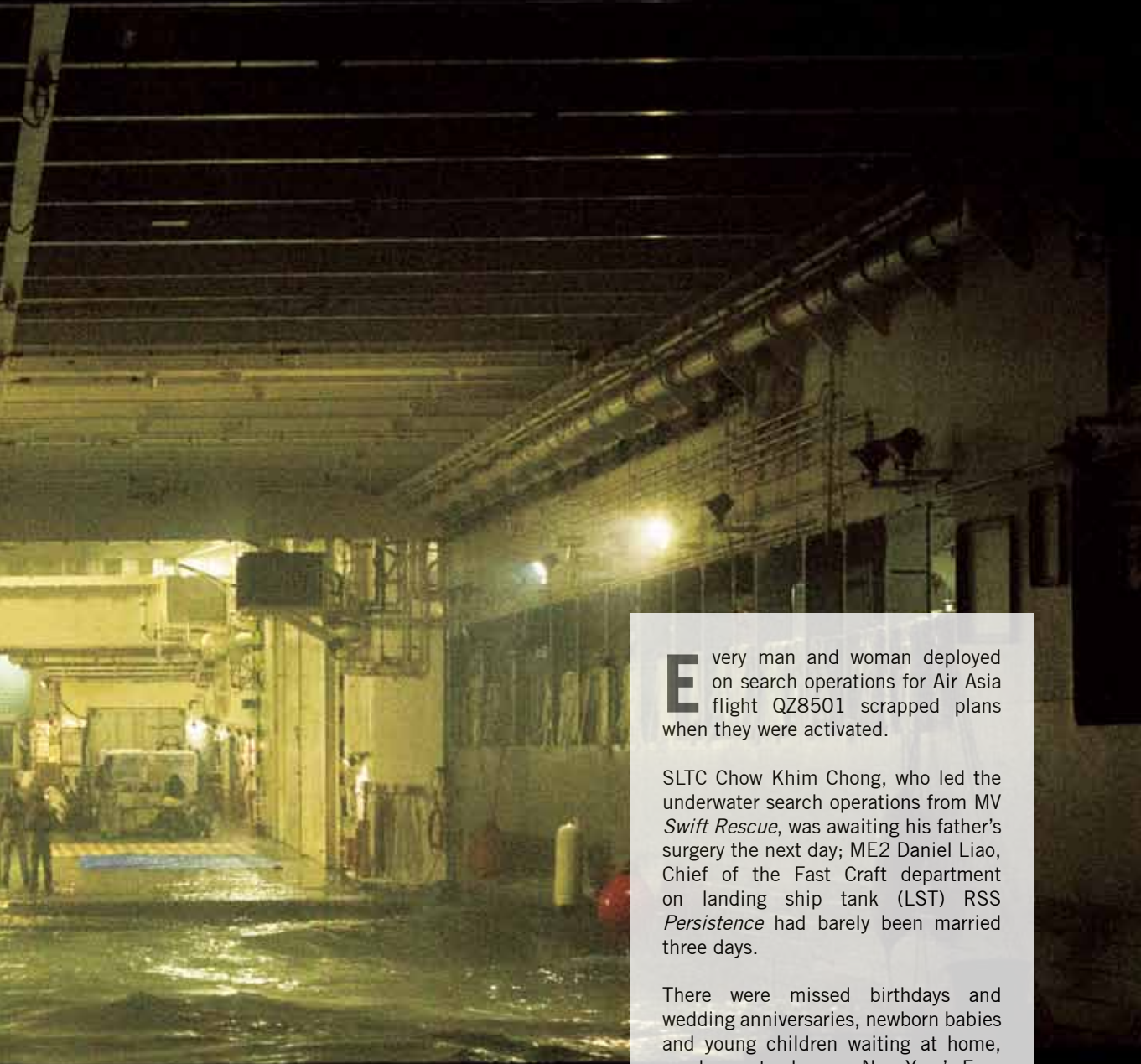
A SEARCH FOR HOPE

By Clara Lock

Photos by Terence Tan, Kenneth Lin and courtesy of RSS Supreme

When Air Asia flight QZ8501 went down in the Java Sea, Singapore lent a hand to the international search for answers, and closure.

Landing ship tank RSS Persistence, which was equipped with fast craft utility and Super Puma helicopters on board, was one of five ships from the RSN participating in search operations for Air Asia flight QZ8501.



Every man and woman deployed on search operations for Air Asia flight QZ8501 scrapped plans when they were activated.

SLTC Chow Khim Chong, who led the underwater search operations from MV *Swift Rescue*, was awaiting his father's surgery the next day; ME2 Daniel Liao, Chief of the Fast Craft department on landing ship tank (LST) RSS *Persistence* had barely been married three days.

There were missed birthdays and wedding anniversaries, newborn babies and young children waiting at home, aged parents alone on New Year's Eve.

But for more than 400 Singapore Armed Forces personnel deployed on this mission, there was no sense of longing when they spoke of their loved ones back home, only a clear-eyed focus on the task at hand.

They were there to do a job. It was what they signed up for.



ME2 Daniel Liao, who helms one of the fast craft utility on board RSS Persistence, prepares the craft for a night launch. Low visibility and swell heights of up to two metres made the operation challenging, but the crew was trained and ready, he said.



Swift response

A frigate, RSS *Supreme* and a missile corvette RSS *Valour* were deployed on 28 December 2014, the same day Air Asia flight QZ8501 went missing. RSS *Persistence* departed the next day with two Super Puma helicopters embarked.

Over the next three days, mine countermeasure vessel (MCMV) RSS *Kallang* and submarine rescue vessel MV *Swift Rescue* joined the operation.

MV *Swift Rescue* had both a dive team and an Autonomous Underwater Vehicle team embarked, the latter flown in to enhance the underwater search.

There are rough templates that search operations of this nature are based upon, standard operating procedures refined over the years. But the specific needs of each search operation vary, and so must the responses.



The six-man Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV) team embarked on MV Swift Rescue deployed their AUV to scour the seabed in a predetermined search pattern.



All items recovered by Singapore's search effort are ferried via Super Puma helicopter to the town of Pangkalan Bun, where they are handed over to Indonesian search and rescue agency BARSANAS.



Every day, all ships received instructions from Indonesian search and rescue agency BARSANAS, which was coordinating the international search effort. This determined the search area that each ship would cover.

For the Super Puma air detachment, which regularly conducts rescue operations within Singapore waters, executing the search was a matter of stringing together the elements of their training that were relevant to this operation.

These included planning and flying search patterns, winching, and takeoff and landing procedures on the LST's flight deck.

"This mission reinforces the tough and realistic training that we go through regularly," says pilot CPT Ryan Tan, who was second in command of the air detachment.

Grim reality

In a search operation speed is of the essence.

When the first ships made their way towards the assigned search sector in the Java Sea, their transit was tinged with hope – of finding survivors, of salvaging life from the wreckage of the missing plane.

As the days wore on, and the odds of finding survivors grew slimmer, the task became a bit more grim.

Finding items from the crash – luggages, a life raft, a window panel, a compressed air cylinder – offered clues to what happened after the plane lost contact with air traffic control.

But pulling up pieces of metal and plastic was far less personal than recovering human remains.

“ Every time I fly, I'm hoping the next thing I see is a living person.”

- 3SG Goh Zhe Wen

When craft coxswain from the Fast Craft Training Unit (FCTU) ME3 Max Yeo led a team to retrieve a body from the side door of RSS *Persistence*, many of the crew involved had never stared death so starkly in the face.

If there was fear, it was secondary to their purpose.

They all wanted to retrieve the body and bring it home.

Every day, personnel on the bridge of each ship conduct a surface search, using binoculars, the electro optic sensor system and the radar to spot debris in the water.



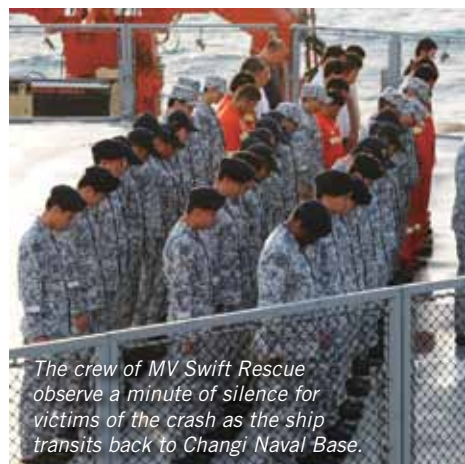
Later a Super Puma helicopter flew the body to Pangkalan Bun, a town in central Kalimantan, where it was handed over to BARSANAS.

From here the Indonesian authorities took charge – to identify the deceased and then inform their family. There would be grief, prayers and burial rites.

This is where certainty takes over, and closure begins.

“ I told my guys that no matter what we face, we want to bring closure to at least one family.”

- ME3 Max Yeo



The crew of MV Swift Rescue observe a minute of silence for victims of the crash as the ship transits back to Changi Naval Base.

Fighting the tide

In the face of tragedy we are often reminded of the power of nature. When the plane crashed, the ocean scattered it asunder, ripping it apart with the force and fury of the monsoon season and its accompanying tides.

The men and women involved in the search faced the same difficulty, with many days of the search marked by rain and winds.

Sea state, a function of wind and swell height that indicates the choppiness of the ocean, regularly hit three and occasionally climbed to four, with waves as high as three metres.

It was particularly rough for RSS *Kallang*, the smallest RSN ship involved in the search effort. It usually operates in the Singapore Strait where the wave height rarely exceeds half a metre.

“Underwater search operations are dependent on the water conditions and the weather,” said CPT Koh Wee Seng, Operations Officer of RSS *Kallang*, who added that the rough seas were a challenge to their search effort.

Rough seas or not, work continued. Medical Officer CPT (Dr) Sim Wei Ping doled out the seasick pills, and the sailors pressed on.



3SG Goh Zhe Wen, who extended his National Service by four months, is an Air Crew Specialist on the Super Puma helicopter. His job is to look out for debris or bodies during the aerial surveillance flights.



Their job, together with MV *Swift Rescue*, was to use the data gathered by the underwater sensor and Remotely Operated Vehicle to find fuselage and the black box from the crash.

Finding answers

17 days after the crash, the Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) on MV *Swift Rescue* captured underwater footage of the wreckage.

The red body of the plane had Air Asia's slogan – Now everyone can fly – emblazoned across it in white. The main fuselage panned across the monitor in MV *Swift Rescue*'s bridge and ROV operations room.

As the crew gathered on the bridge to view this footage, their somber mood was mirrored in news reports around the region that confirmed the fate of flight QZ8501.

It had been 17 days since the crash, and 16 since the ship had been at sea.

Keep calm and carry on

When they answered the call of duty, none of the servicemen knew how long the deployment would last, only that they would be there as long as it took.

"People fall back on buttresses of support," said Dr Abhiram, the medical officer on board RSS *Persistence*.

For the old hands – cluster chiefs, coxswains, and supervisors – their strength came from bolstering the morale of their men.

"I'm always thinking about what my guys are feeling, and what they are going through," said FCTU craft coxswain ME3 Yeo.

Then there are those who are driven by their thoughts of home, and how they could possibly offer this comfort to another family. It was inevitable for the crew to wonder – what if it had been my loved one on that plane?

"If you had lost someone, you would hope that anyone doing a search operation would be doing their best to find something," said 3SG Goh Zhe Wen, an air crew specialist from the Super Puma detachment.

So the men and women pushed on, keeping their eyes on the water; from the sky; beneath the waves.

They knew they were the lucky ones. They would have a homecoming.

When that happened – MV *Swift Rescue* was the last ship to return, after 20 days at sea – they picked up daily life where they left off. There were spouses waiting with open arms, young children waiting for a hug, parents relieved at their child's safe return.

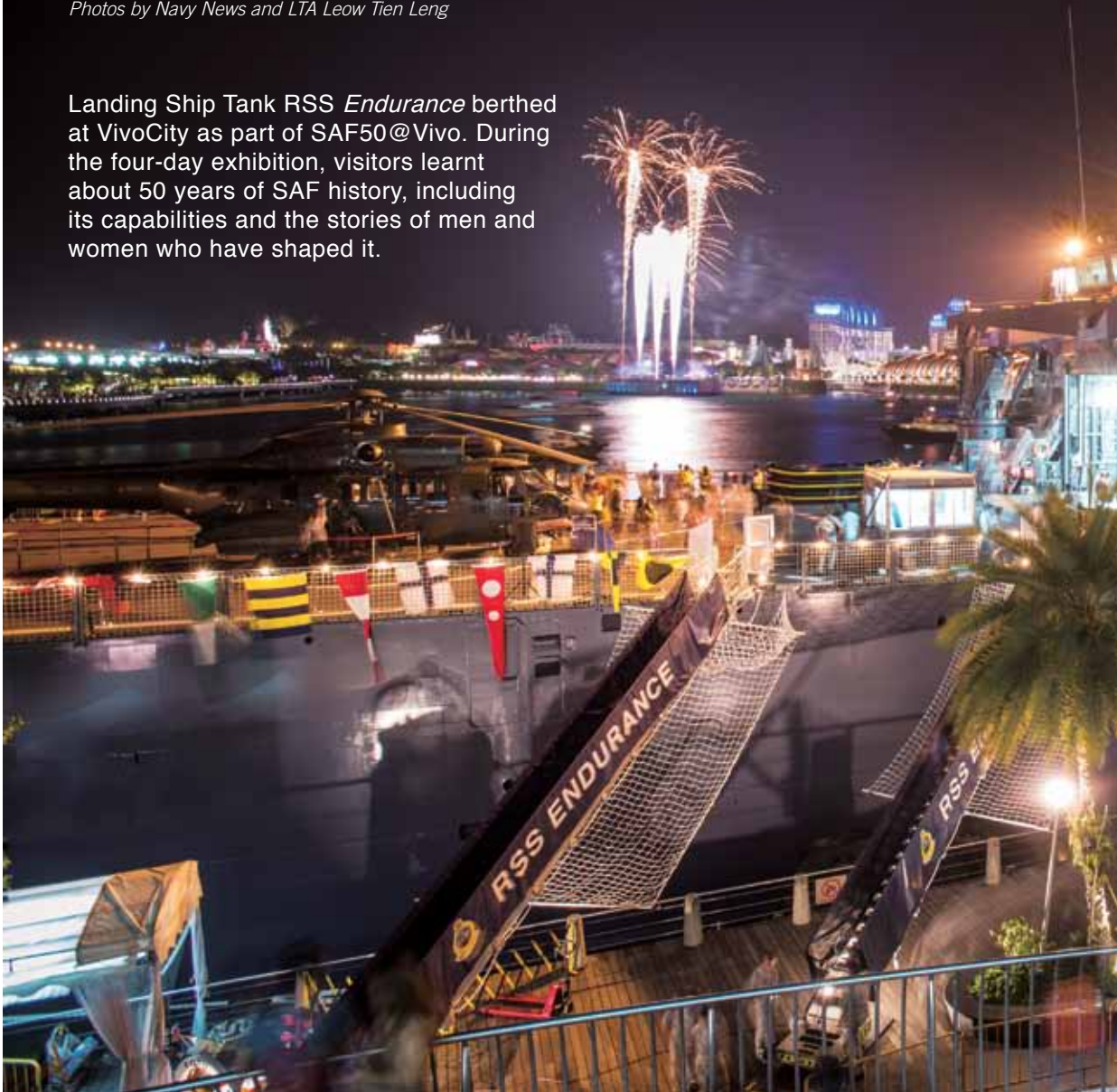
The next day the servicemen were back on standby, on alert; ready to deploy at a moment's notice.

They have a job to do. It is, after all, what they signed up for.

SAF50 ON THE WATERFRONT

Photos by Navy News and LTA Leow Tien Leng

Landing Ship Tank RSS *Endurance* berthed at VivoCity as part of SAF50@Vivo. During the four-day exhibition, visitors learnt about 50 years of SAF history, including its capabilities and the stories of men and women who have shaped it.



SAF50@Vivo, which ran from 12 to 15 Feb, played host to over 87,000 people at VivoCity. Landing ship tank RSS *Endurance* opened its doors to the public, offering ship tours and rides on the Fast Craft Utility (FCU).





1 LTA Huang Xiangting, who is the Navigation Officer on RSS *Endeavour*, explains the bridge control unit on the ship's bridge wing to a group of students from the Cannossian School for the hearing impaired. The students, together with groups such as Sea Scouts and canoeists, sailed with RSS *Endurance* on its three hour transit from Changi Naval Base to VivoCity.

2 The crew of RSS *Endurance* spent long hours preparing the ship for the event, and ensuring that it was ready for public display. Here, ME1 Melvin Lee dresses the ship, rigging up flags and pennants around its flight deck for decoration. This is usually done when ships host cocktails in foreign ports, or during occasions such as Navy Day and National Day.





3

3 The sunset contingent forms up in the hangar, just before they march out for the ceremonial sunset ceremony. ME1 Max Chong leads the contingent into the flight deck and subsequently hands over the parade to the Parade Commander, MAJ Tan Tian Sheng.

4



4 On Total Defence Day, the ceremonial sunset ceremony was held in conjunction for the first time with a Weapons Presentation Ceremony. 180 recruits from the 9th Battalion, Singapore Infantry Regiment, received their Singapore Assault Rifles 21 on board RSS Endurance.

5 Visitors to the shore exhibition got to climb up a replica of the Archer-class submarine conning tower, the first time they got to lay eyes on a part of this undersea conqueror.



5





6 Naming the future: The RSN's upcoming littoral mission vessels were unveiled at the launch of SAF50@Vivo, with a ship naming contest open to the public.

7 Divers from the Naval Diving Unit, who were also part of the Jack Neo movie *Ah Boys to Men 3: Frogmen*, demonstrated their physical training routine with inflatable rubber boats weighing approximately 80kg.

8 Visitors to RSS *Endurance* enjoyed rides on the FCUs, where they sailed to Sentosa's Siloso Beach and back. Ambassadors on the 30-minute ride shared with visitors what the Navy does, including trivia such as the top speed of the FCU.

PILLAR OF SUPPORT

Story by S Mitra

Photos by Jonathan Ryan, ME2 Jasper Ong and courtesy of interviewees

They may be mighty men (and women) of the Singapore Navy, but RSN personnel agree that much of the credit go to their spouses, who keep the family ship-shape while they go out to sea.

"I'm proud that my husband protects the seas and defends the country," says Miss Jacklyn Chew, who will be married to CPT Wei Lai later this year.



Ms Davina Tham is used to being independent.

Two months after she married ME2 Ng Guan Teck, the newlywed bade her husband farewell when he was deployed to San Diego in the United States of America for the Peace Triton deployment. The deployment aboard frigate RSS *Stalwart* lasted six and a half months.

Three years later, while she was five months pregnant, ME2 Ng left on the three-month long Southern Friendship deployment to Australia, New Zealand and Indonesia.

He returned home just one month before their daughter Naomi was born.

“These are just the longer ones,” says Ms Tham, suggesting that there is much she has already learnt to take in her stride.

“When he’s away on an exercise or deployment, you have to manage the household and family alone and be the primary caregiver for your child,” she says.

Her challenges are not unique. In the Navy, where deployments are the norm and separation from family is a part of the job, every spouse is a quiet pillar of strength.

Keeping house

For the RSN personnel, having a partner to rely on back home makes being out at sea easier.

When ME2 Amy Lim is away, her husband ME2 (NS) Charles Tan runs the household.

The couple choose not to hire a domestic helper as they want to be actively involved in the formative years of their two sons aged seven and five.

So Dad does it all – getting them dressed, shuttling them to school and childcare, and coaching them when they do their homework.

“As a mother, being away from home is tough for her. We believe that home is where the heart is. So when she’s away, I try my best to take care of our family so that she can concentrate on her work,” says ME2 (NS) Tan, who met his wife in 2003 while they were both in service.

The couple have been married for a decade.

ME2 Lim says: “It’s tough leaving them behind when I sail, but I feel more at ease knowing that my husband will do whatever he can to ensure everything runs smoothly in my absence.”



One Navy Family : Having a partner to rely on makes being out at sea easier for RSIN personnel.

All hands on deck

When partners are away, it helps to have family and friends pitch in.

Business proprietor ME2 (NS) Tan relies on his parents, who help to babysit their grandsons when his wife is away and he has work appointments that stretch into the evening.

The 35-year-old has also made fast friends with the parents of his children's buddies in school.

Together the parents form a network where they regularly have dinner, go on outings and even travel overseas together. Crucially, they also babysit each other's children when parents have errands to run.

"Juggling my various commitments is only possible with the help of

family and friends, and I am very grateful for their support," says ME2 (NS) Tan.

Silent supporters

Defending Singapore's every day; ensuring maritime

security; securing sea lines of communication – for the servicemen, these are the broad strokes that define what it means to be in the Navy.

When patrol vessels go out on patrol in the Singapore Strait



ME2 Amy Lim and her husband ME2(NS) Charles Tan, who met in the Navy, share the roles in the family and taking care of the kids.



Submariner MAJ Daniel Tee and his wife, Ms Cheryl Chiam, have a son aged one.



the crew knows the significance of maritime presence in these shipping lanes.

When LSTs call on foreign ports, the men and women on board see first-hand how this enhances defence relations.

“ Being a Navy wife is the hardest appointment in the whole Navy. ”

– MAJ Daniel Tee

Navy spouses come to understand these concepts too – through stories their partners tell, and learning about what their partners are passionate about.

Ms Tham became interested in reading about naval warfare during her husband's stint during Peace Triton, which was for the integration of the naval helicopters with the frigates.

“I read about military stuff like Anti-Submarine Warfare, towed

array sonars, anti-ship missiles and about Combined Task Force 151, counter-piracy in the Gulf of Aden,” says the bank relationship manager, rattling off naval terms with ease.

It gives context to the physical separation. Understanding what their spouses do makes it easier for them to accept the unpredictability of routines, the difficulty in planning leisure time together, and the long hours their partners keep – challenges that many Navy spouses concur on.

But it can take time for partners to adapt. Ms Cheryl Chiam, who is married to submariner MAJ Daniel Tee, concedes that at the start of their marriage, she had some difficulty coping with being alone when her husband went to sea.

She says: “I feel now that I have learnt better what it means to be a military family and not to compare our family with others and fret over not achieving so-called “ideals” like going out every weekend or never missing birthday or anniversary celebrations together.”

But if they agree on the challenges of being a Navy spouse, they also agree on the motivations.

“I’m proud that my husband protects the seas and defends the country,” says bride-to-be Miss Jacklyn Chew, who will be married to CPT Wei Lai this year.

Ms Chiam concurs, adding: “Our family is special and unique, and that makes me treasure the time we have together even more.”

And her husband recognises that though he wears the uniform, his wife's role is just as important in his chosen career.

“My service in the Navy is a calling for the entire family,” he says, adding: “Being a Navy wife is the hardest appointment in the whole Navy.”

TO LEAD AND SERVE

Story and photos by S Mitra

For the first time, three Navy Operationally Ready National Servicemen (NSmen) are enrolled in the Command and Staff Course with their regular counterparts. They share how support from their employers and business partners allows them to better serve the nation.

When MAJ (NS) Terence Quek attended the opening ceremony of the Command and Staff Course (National Service) (CSC(NS)), he brought two of his business partners as guests.

Together the trio helm Emergenetics, a human resource consultancy company.

It was his way of thanking them for the support that allowed him to enrol in CSC(NS), a 41-week course that includes a five-week residential period, where participants will be involved in scenario planning, lectures, discussions and presentations.

Selected SAF officers undergo the Command and Staff Course before assuming higher command and staff appointments in the SAF.

Work-study balance

The course is a milestone in the careers of many RSN

personnel, and many jump at the opportunity.

But all three NSmen agree that before enrolling for the course, they had to make sure they could balance their day job and course requirements.

For MAJ (NS) David Seow, an Assistant Director and Senior Lecturer at Ngee Ann Polytechnic, the course is an opportunity for his professional and leadership development.

“The naval officers I meet during the course will broaden my understanding of maritime operations,” said MAJ (NS) Seow, who teaches Marine and Offshore Technology.

He adds that his employers are supportive of his participation.

So are MAJ (NS) Quek’s business partners, who believe in the importance of national service.



MAJ (NS) Quek said: “To be able to attend the course, I am blessed to have great business partners and a team at work who understand and support me in taking time away from work to attend it. I wouldn’t be able to attend if not for their strong support and belief that our sacrifice is meaningful.”

Paving the path

They are the first Navy NSmen attending the course, and the RSN has plans to send more in future. The move is to develop and train them for

command appointments. The NSmen are glad for the opportunity – both to lead, and to inspire others.

LTC (NS) Daryl Ou, the third NSMan enrolled in this year’s course, said: “This course is the Navy acknowledging and appreciating the effort we have put in, as NSmen, into defending our country. I’m glad the Navy has recognised the importance of upgrading the skills of NS commanders. Being one of the first Navy NSmen selected for the course, I hope other NSmen who feel like they have more to give, can do so.”




(L-R) NSMen MAJ (NS) David Seow, LTC (NS) Daryl Ou and MAJ (NS) Terence Quek are the first three Navy NSmen enrolled in the Command and Staff Course, which prepares them for higher command and staff appointments in the SAF.



The 50km ride started and ended at RSS Endurance, which was berthed at VivoCity as part of the SAF50@Vivo exhibition. It took cyclists round the island, passing industrial estates in Jurong as well as landmarks such as the war memorial, the Cenotaph.

CITY CYCLING

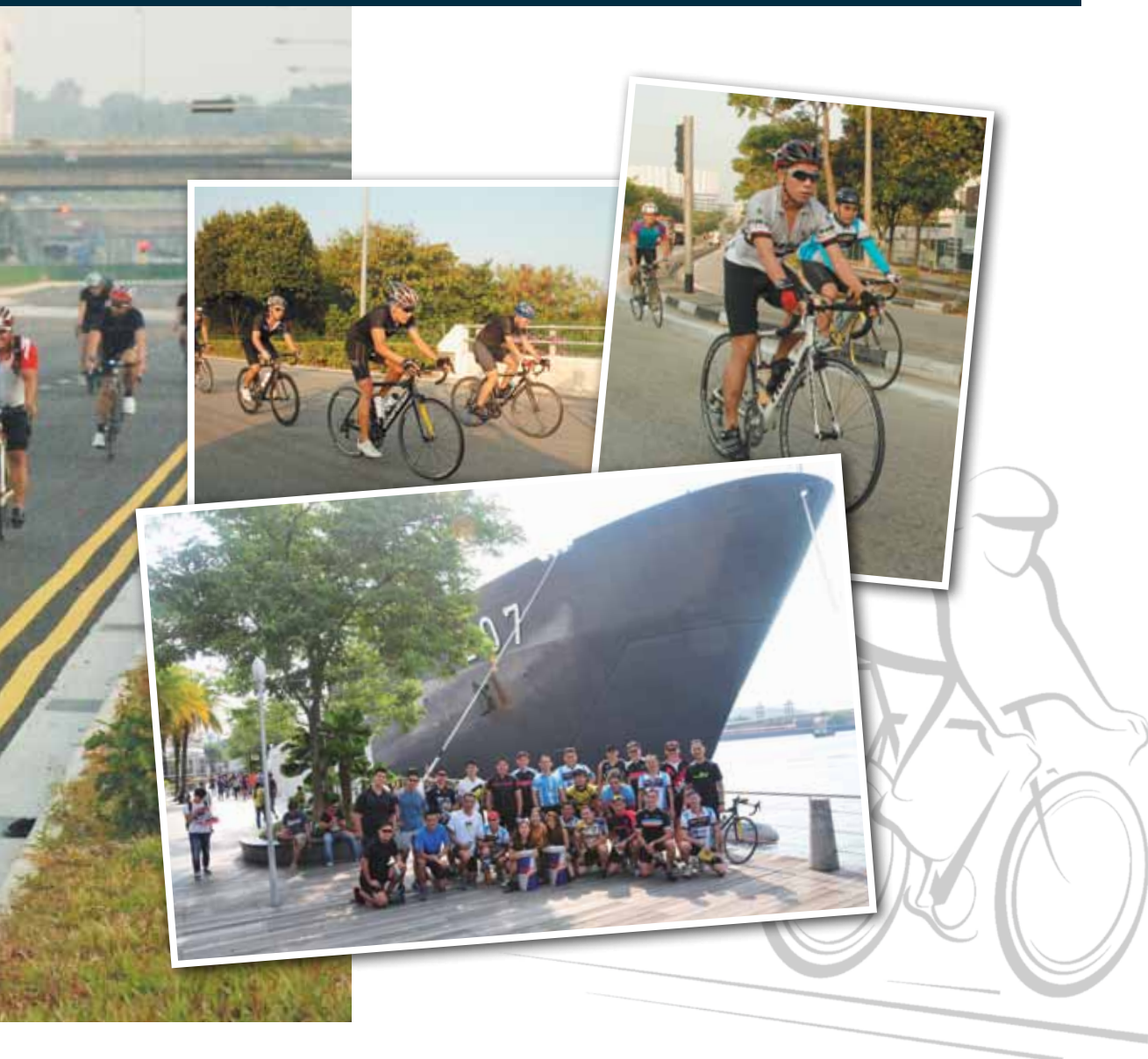
A stylized, light gray graphic of a cyclist in motion, positioned behind the word 'CYCLING' in the title.

Story and photos by Joel Ng

SAF personnel cycle a 50km route to commemorate Total Defence and SAF50@Vivo.

It was well before dawn on a chilly Sunday morning. While most were still slumbering, a group of cyclists gathered under the shadow of landing ship tank RSS *Endurance*, berthed along the Promenade waterfront of VivoCity, as part of the SAF50@Vivo celebrations.

The group of about 50 active servicemen and Operationally Ready National Servicemen from the RSN and Army warmed up, caught up and suited up before the 50km ride.



Organiser LTC Terence Ho said: "This a meaningful way to commemorate the 50th anniversary of our nation and the SAF, by cycling on a route that alludes to our history and reminds us of what we are fighting to defend."

Starting from RSS *Endurance's* temporary berth at VivoCity, the 50km route took the cyclists to industrial facilities such as the hulking petrochemical refineries in Jurong; across the length of the West Coast Highway to economic

landmarks such as the glitzy glass-and-steel towers of the Marina Bay Financial Centre, and historical monuments such as the Cenotaph, a memorial to those who lost their lives in World Wars I and II.

For ME2 Foong Wei Sheng, the event was a chance for him to maintain his fitness level.

ME2 Foong picked up cycling as an alternative to running and other high impact activities after a leg injury four years ago. He said: "I

particularly relish the challenge of starting from the back of a pack of fellow cyclists and working my way relentlessly to the front over the course of the route."

The event was also a chance for the participants to bond in a casual setting outside of work.

MAJ(NS) Rayson Lim said: "I appreciate the opportunity to meet up again with my fellow cycling enthusiasts from the RSN today - the light traffic on a Sunday morning makes the ride a joy."

RIDE ON

Story by Kimitsu Yogachi

Photos by Joel Ng

If you're looking to up your pedal power, here are some tips from avid cyclists MAJ(NS) Rayson Lim and ME2 Foong Wei Sheng who took part in the SAF50@Vivo 50km cycling event earlier this year.

TRAINING

Quality, not quantity

Train smarter by focusing on the type of terrain you'll be covering or competing on. If your route is mainly on flat ground, then train to become a road sprinter by blasting up and down that kind of roads. Similarly, if you are going to be encountering road inclinations, then make sure that your training regime includes more uphill segments.

Chart your course

Before you set out, familiarise yourself with a planned route, so you won't break your concentration trying to navigate on the road. This would allow you to focus on your training. Planning a route allows you the bonus of exploring new areas in Singapore. More importantly, it enhances your safety as you already have a mental map of potential hazards such as busy roads.

Fuel up

Apart from ensuring that you drink enough liquids to replenish water-loss in our hot and humid weather, it is important to have enough nutrients when you cycle long distance. If you are planning for a long ride, be sure to have a power bar with you so that you can fuel up along the way. But don't wait till you feel hungry or tired – eat regularly as you are riding to energise yourself and keep your ride going.



Training smart and cycling safely are two key elements of a succesful ride, says ME2 Foong Wei Sheng (pictured)



KIT

Arm yourself with the right gear

Your running shoes fit right – your bicycle should too. It is important to make sure that your bicycle is of a suitable size to help you go the distance. Get help when purchasing a bicycle to make sure you have the correct posture when you mount your two-wheeler. The most important variables are the heights of the handlebar and the saddle. Getting it right will not only give you better comfort, but also increase on-road performance.

Stay Tip Top

After all that training, make sure that your gear is in as good shape as you are. Check that your tyres are properly inflated, brakes are functioning well, and chain is cleaned and lubricated. A well maintained bicycle ensures that you won't get stranded by mechanical issues.

SAFETY FIRST

See and be seen

Whether you are riding in the day or night, be sure to wear the right kit. It's best to don bright coloured gear to increase your visibility to other road users. If you plan on riding into the night, have sufficient lights – front and rear – to attract the attention of other drivers. Be sure to wear a helmet to protect yourself from serious head injuries should you fall.

Stay alert, stay alive

Being smaller and without an engine, you are vulnerable on the road. It's imperative that you observe all traffic laws. While cycling, look out for other motor vehicles and anticipate their movement, especially at junctions or when traffic is heavy. Also look out for vehicles from the left or right, even if the light is in your favour.

HOLD THE FORT

Story by CPL (NS) Yagachi Kimitsu

Photos courtesy of Sentosa Development Corporation

The British Empire built as many as 11 artillery forts for the southern and western coastal defence, with the highest concentration of them found in Sentosa. Here are a few you can still visit and explore.

Fort Siloso

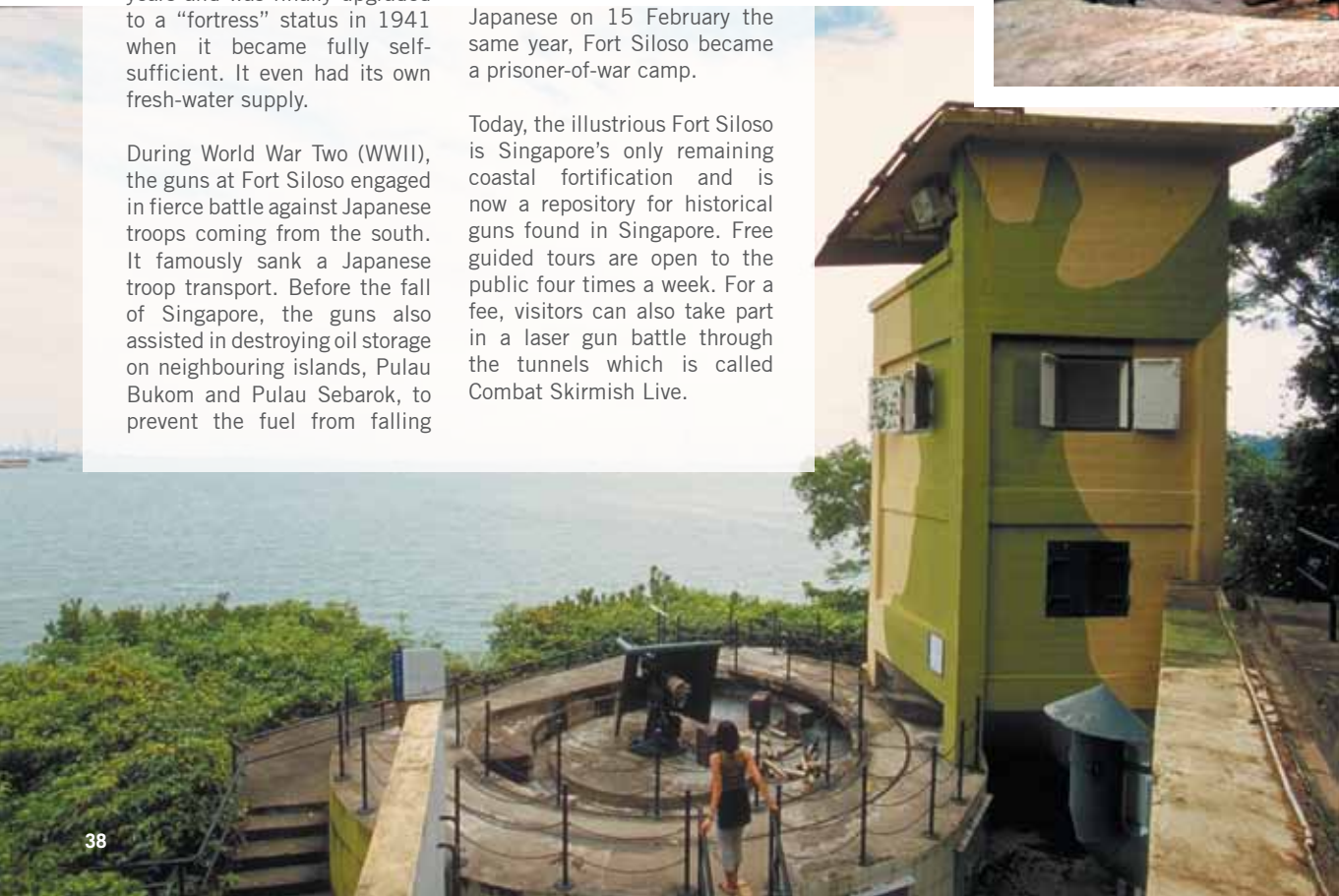
Perhaps the most famous of all the forts, construction of Fort Siloso started in 1879 and was completed in 1885. The four-hectare area underwent numerous upgrades over the years and was finally upgraded to a “fortress” status in 1941 when it became fully self-sufficient. It even had its own fresh-water supply.

During World War Two (WWII), the guns at Fort Siloso engaged in fierce battle against Japanese troops coming from the south. It famously sank a Japanese troop transport. Before the fall of Singapore, the guns also assisted in destroying oil storage on neighbouring islands, Pulau Bukom and Pulau Sebarok, to prevent the fuel from falling

into Japanese hands. Fort Siloso was heavily shelled and bombed by Japanese forces on 12-14 February 1942, and it sustained heavy damage with one dormitory demolished by the incursion.

After the surrender to the Japanese on 15 February the same year, Fort Siloso became a prisoner-of-war camp.

Today, the illustrious Fort Siloso is Singapore's only remaining coastal fortification and is now a repository for historical guns found in Singapore. Free guided tours are open to the public four times a week. For a fee, visitors can also take part in a laser gun battle through the tunnels which is called Combat Skirmish Live.





Today, Fort Siloso is Singapore's only remaining coastal fortification. Free guided tours are open to the public four times a week.



Fort Serapong

Unlike Fort Siloso, not much is known about the abandoned Fort Serapong.

It was built in 1879 atop Bukit Serapong, where it gets its name from. This was the highest point on

Sentosa, and presumably gave the best vantage point to spot hostile forces.

However, Fort Serapong saw little action during WWII as the invading Japanese forces attacked Singapore from the north instead of the sea. After the British surrender,

the fort was abandoned.

In April 2006, a team of archaeologists conducted an excavation to study the history of the fort, which had been partially covered by overgrowth of surrounding trees. It was found that the defence post was also



To learn more about the significance that the artillery forts in Singapore had, readers can visit tourist attractions such as Fort Siloso, as well as lesser-known jewels such as Fort Serapong (pictured).



self-sufficient with its own water collection system. It had a network of batteries, tunnels, underground bunks and observation posts.

Today, visitors can explore the old structures of the fort, and enjoy spectacular views of the Singapore city skyline.



Mount Imbiah Battery

Mention Imbiah, and you might think of a touristy spot with the towering Sentosa Merlion, or Madame Tussauds wax museum.

But the hill that these attractions stand on was home to a redoubt back in the day.

Up the 60-metre summit of Mount Imbiah is the remnant of a pre-WWII gun post that was abandoned in the 1930s.

The redoubt was used as a post to screen merchant vessels or resist entry of hostile ships before they entered Singapore's harbour.

Visitors today can enjoy the commanding sea views of the Western Anchorage and watch merchant ships go by.

Fort Connaught

Sitting on the other end of the island is Fort Connaught, which was tasked to protect Singapore from incursions from the east. It was built in 1878 as the Pulau Belakang Mati battery, but was later renamed in commemoration of the Duke of Connaught who visited Singapore in 1890.

The fort was rebuilt in the 1930s and saw the fiercest battle among all the forts on the island in WWII. It spent all its ammunition fending off the Japanese forces, and was destroyed by the British forces before the surrender to the enemy.

Today, part of the Sentosa Golf Club sits on the abandoned fort, with the Half Way Rest clubhouse on two of three gun sites and off-limits to the public.



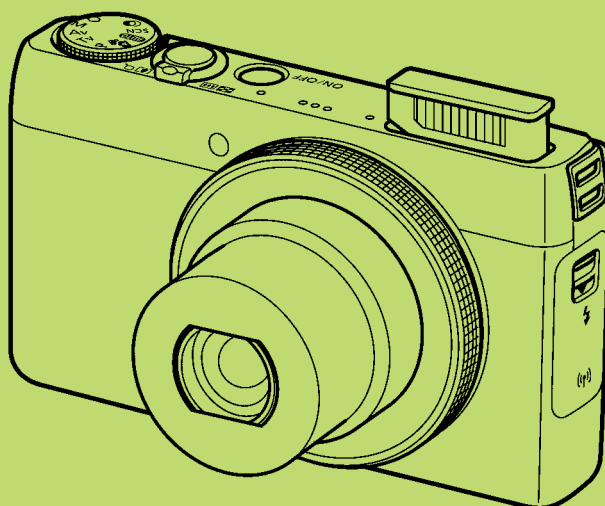
TRIGGER HAPPY

Story by 2LT Loy Wen Bin

The number and types of cameras on the market have exploded in the recent years. Here's a simple consumer guide for those who are looking to capture those special moments.

1 Point and shoot

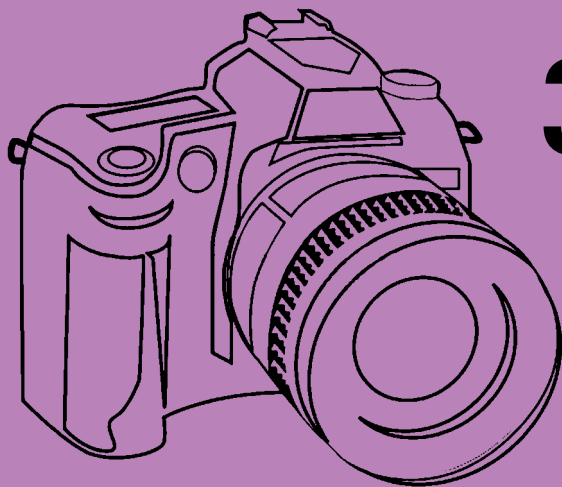
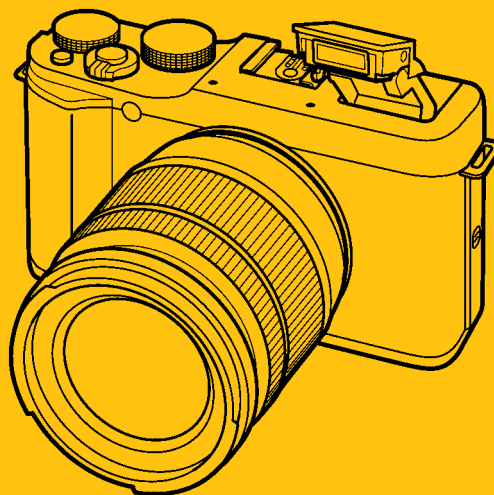
If you are looking for a simple, affordable camera that can take decent photographs of day-to-day activities, pick up a point-and-shoot. They are easy to use as there are many pre-programmed settings to suit the situation. Point-and-shoots are compact and lightweight, making them easy to carry around. They are also cheaper and easier to maintain than professional cameras.



2 Micro four-thirds

Micro four-thirds cameras are designed without mirror boxes found in digital single lens reflex (DSLR) cameras, allowing them to be built smaller and more portable while maintaining good image quality.

These mirrorless cameras are ideal for the prosumer, who wants a bit more control over settings and functions without having to shell out for a DSLR camera. These cameras allow users to adjust individual settings such as aperture and shutter speeds. Most bodies are also fairly small and portable, and lenses can be swapped to suit different subjects.



3 Digital Single-Lens Reflex (DSLR)

DSLR cameras allow the user full control over the camera's settings, and most DSLRs come equipped with a high-definition video function. Although they are larger, heavier and more expensive than point-and-shoots or micro four-thirds, the seasoned photographer is likely to favour DSLRs for their versatility and quality of the images they produce. Most users will take longer to master a DSLR, but the payoff is usually worth it.

4 Instant photography

Instant cameras offer a different approach to photography in this day and age of photo editing and sepia-toned filters. They produce an immediate tangible print of the photograph captured and each photograph is unique because that it cannot be duplicated. Although it may be difficult to control the focus and exposure of instant cameras, the fuzzy, retro feel is part of their charm.



PIONEERING SPIRIT

Story by CPL (NS) Yogachi Kimitsu

Photos by CPL (NS) Yogachi Kimitsu and courtesy of CPT (Ret) Ernest H Wickramsinghe

The Singapore Armed Forces celebrates its Golden Jubilee this year. In the first of a four-part series, Navy News speaks to the men who pioneered – and unknowingly – shaped the Republic of Singapore Navy into the force it is today.



The crew of RSS Panglima, which spent 23 days at sea during Operation Thunderstorm, pose before their ship berthed at Brani Naval Base.



COL (Ret) Alan Bragassam, 67

“When I joined, the Navy only had a wooden boat and a river boat. But look at RSN today: we had missile gunboats, then corvettes and now frigates. We have transformed into the best small navy in the region. In the next 50 years, I wish that the men and women of RSN will continue to maintain the edge that we have created – by continuously upgrading both technology and its people.”

– COL (Ret) Alan Bragassam

“I served in various appointments during my 10 years with the RSN. One of them was as the Commanding Officer of RSS *Panglima*. Among its achievements was its involvement in Operation Thunderstorm, in May 1975. That year, boat people were on their way south along the east coast of Malaysia, and wanted to come ashore in Singapore. RSS *Panglima* was the first RSN warship to confront these initial refugee boats from coming ashore. We were deployed for 23 days, and our duty was to prevent these boats from coming ashore. I am proud to have been the Commanding Officer of RSS *Panglima* and to have led a wonderful group of officers and men who served with courage and discipline during the 23 trying days during Operation Thunderstorm.”

– CPT (Ret) Ernest H Wickramsinghe



FROM PAST TO FUTURE

Photo by Jonathan Ryan

RSS *Challenger*, the boat on which many of our pioneer submariners trained, is now the name of a submarine training centre.

Chief of Navy RADM Lai Chung Han officiated at the launch of RSS *Challenger* – submarine training centre – on 11 March, which was held in conjunction with the retirement ceremony for RSS *Challenger* and RSS *Centurion*.

COL (RET) Cyril Lee, who was the first Commanding Officer of RSS *Challenger*, said: “We marked the start of submarine capabilities for Singapore, but standing down is a rite of passage that all ships have to go through. I am happy that the name RSS *Challenger* continues to live on, and will mould the future of the submarine fraternity in the RSN.”

REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE



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